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Chapter 14
The Ten Most Common Digital Marketing Mistakes

Digital marketing evolves rapidly, and you often find yourself trying out new tools and tactics daily. When you're constantly venturing into uncharted territory, you're bound to make mistakes. Don't sweat it; making mistakes is how you learn.

That said, not all mistakes are made equal. The mistakes listed in this chapter are more about your mindset than they are about a tactical error, such as sending out an email without testing the links. You'll inevitably make tactical mistakes in your marketing, and you'll bounce back. But making the mistakes described in this chapter limits your growth, and if you avoid them, you should see a significant positive effect on your results.

Focusing on Eyeballs Instead of Offers

This might shock you, but you don't have a website traffic problem. When you aren't making sales, the solution is not to get more eyeballs on the page. Eyeballs can be bought (as we soon discuss), but the messaging and offers that you deliver to those eyeballs are the biggest difference makers.

When things go wrong, and we mean really wrong, don't spend energy on optimizing the landing page for more Google traffic or scheduling more tweets about the offer. Instead, change what you're offering to meet the desires of your market. First, prove the offer; then, turn the traffic on. For more on crafting stellar offers, turn to Chapter 3.

Failing to Talk about Your Customers (and Their Problems)

People don't care about your product; rather, they care about how your product can make their life better. Stop talking about your product's features and instead describe how your product can transform the customer in a meaningful way.

Business is pretty simple. We get paid to move people from a "Before" state to a desired "After" state. In the Before state, customers are discontent in some way. They might be in pain, bored, frightened, or unhappy for any number of other reasons.

In the After state, life is better. They are free of pain, entertained, or unafraid of what previously plagued them. People don't buy products or services; they buy transformation. In other words, they buy access to the After state. A great offer genuinely moves a customer to a desired After state, and great marketing simply articulates the move from the Before state to the desired After state.

Most businesses that fail, particularly at startup or when entering new markets, do so because they fail to offer a desired After state (the offer is no good) or they fail to articulate the movement from Before to After (the marketing is no good).

Needless to say, getting clear on the desired outcome that your offer delivers is fundamental to the success of your marketing. Turn to Chapter 1 for more on the Before and After states, and see Chapter 3 for the process of creating offers.

Asking Prospects for Too Much, Too Soon

Imagine that a nice, good-looking, successful guy walks into a bar and immediately proposes marriage to the first single woman he sees. While maybe he is sure that he is ready to be marries, he has no way of knowing if the women is interested in him, or even marriage in general.

This idea seems super obvious when we put it in terms of human relationships, but for some reason, we often "propose marriage" (ask prospects for a major commitment) too early when marketing. Your business might be marketing Business to Consumer (B2C) or Business to Business (B2B), but every business is actually marketing Human to Human (H2H).

As a result, the offers you make to prospects and existing customers should progress in the same way that people develop normal, healthy human relationships. Human relationships go through a process, and the same is true of businesses and their customers. How can you structure the offers you make to prospects and new leads in a way that helps them progress through the relationship?

Being Unwilling to Pay for Traffic

There was a time when search engine optimization (SEO) and social media was easy, and free traffic from the likes of Google and Facebook was reliable and plentiful. Now, however, although search and social media marketing are still important, the days of free-and-easy traffic are over.

Today, reliable and high-quality website traffic is bought and sold like grain or gasoline. If you want a reliable source of gasoline, you go to the gas station and purchase it. Similarly, reliable website traffic is a commodity, and if you want to market at scale, you need to go to the traffic store and buy it. The web has no shortage of traffic stores (Google, Bing, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, and more) that are more than willing to sell you high-quality website traffic at a fair price. You can find out more about paid traffic in Chapter 10.

Being Product Centric

When most businesses are marketing, they focus on the product. However, the businesses that last don't define themselves by the product(s) they sell. Instead, they define themselves by the market they serve.

For example, in the 1920s, a French fashion designer and businesswoman published a picture of a simple black dress in *Vogue* magazine. Before this time, wearing black was reserved for periods of mourning. Since its introduction a century ago, however, the "little black dress" has become an enduring wardrobe staple for many women. The French fashion designer who published that picture in *Vogue* was none other than Coco Chanel, founder of the Chanel brand.

Although Chanel has sold many "little black dresses" in its time, the company has not defined itself by even this iconic product. Instead, Chanel sells everything from clothing and jewelry to fragrances and skin care products, all to women with a taste for fine fashion.

A product does not a business make. Identify who you're serving and advocate for that market by creating the products and services your customers want and need.

Tracking the Wrong Metrics

Digital marketing is trackable, almost to a fault. You can, for example, use Google Analytics (a free program) to determine the sales of persons visiting your website from Ohio, on Tuesdays, and when using an iPhone. Although that data might be absolutely relevant to your business, every business should be tracking two overarching metrics: Cost of Acquisition (COA) and Average Customer Value (ACV).

Cost of Acquisition is the amount of money you must spend to acquire a single customer. For example, imagine that you sell men's dress shirts and acquire new customers by using Facebook ads. Say that you determine that it costs $40 in ad spend to acquire each new customer. You've therefore determined that the Cost of Acquisition (COA) for this offer is $40.

Now, for this same shirt offer, you want to calculate the Average Customer Value, or ACV. You can calculate this in a number of ways, but our favorite metric is to calculate the immediate value of a new customer. In the example, each new shirt sale generates $20 in net profit (revenue minus expenses), and, on average, a new customer buys two shirts. So each new customer results in $40 in profit for the business. This is good news because it means that this business can generate new customers with this offer and marketing campaign at a break-even point. Any additional sales made to these newly generated customers result in additional profit for the business.

There is a time and place to dive deep into the numbers, but always remember that the amount it costs to acquire a customer and the average value a new customer brings to the business are the most important metrics to track. For more on data analysis and optimizing campaigns, turn to Chapters 12 and 13.

Building Assets on Other People's Land

Although networks like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube give you access to billions of people, focusing 100 percent of your attention on creating audiences on these platforms is dangerous. These platforms can, and will, change their rules from time to time, and those changes may not be in your favor.

Instead, focus on building media assets that you own, particularly your email list. You should absolutely build connections on major networks like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, of course, but look to migrate those connections to an asset you have more control over. You can find out more about building email campaigns in Chapter 11.

Focusing on Your Content's Quantity Instead of Quality

The truth is that the Internet doesn't need another blog post, podcast, or YouTube video. Much has been written about the amount of content added to the web each day. It is, indeed, a staggering amount. Our social media feeds and email inboxes are crammed with content.

That said, the Internet does lack *remarkable* content, and if you can provide it, you will get traction from it. Instead of creating ten new blog posts over the next month, put ten times the effort into creating a single remarkable post. Then, prime the pump by forcing some eyeballs on your masterpiece by buying traffic to it, as discussed in Chapter 10.

Not Aligning Marketing Goals with Sales Goals

If you own or work for an organization with a sales and marketing department, you know that these two teams don't always see eye to eye. Marketing and sales fight with one another because they have different goals. Marketing thinks it's all about "awareness," whereas sales just cares about . . . well, sales. Marketing gets annoyed at sales for overpromising and under delivering, and sales gets annoyed at marketing because the leads aren't "sales ready" and there aren't enough of them.

The key to fixing this situation is to get marketing and sales on the same page. Literally.

Both departments need to understand that they serve different positions on the same team, and the goal isn't awareness, or sales, but rather happy, successful customers. To achieve this goal, marketing must generate awareness and leads, and sales must close those leads, but if the customer experience isn't amazing, everyone has failed.

Allowing "Shiny Objects" to Distract You

This mistake, more than any other, is responsible for the demise of businesses that market their businesses online. New channels, tools, and tactics spring up on a daily basis in this fast-moving industry, and your best bet is to ignore them. As we mention in Chapter 1, digital marketing is less about the "digital" and more about the "marketing."

Instead of becoming distracted by the new, concentrate on what has always worked. Focus on acquiring new customers with great offers and supporting those acquisition efforts with high-quality content and a sound traffic strategy. Focus on improving your email follow-up (Chapter 11) and the measurement (Chapter 12) and optimization of your campaigns (Chapter 13).

Whatever you do, don't delay. Start putting the fundamentals that you've learned in this book into practice and learn as you go. The beauty of marketing in a digital environment is that almost nothing you do is permanent. Virtually every campaign you create can be changed with a few clicks of the mouse. Let your competition focus on the "next big thing" while you focus on the fundamentals.